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JACQUES-ALBERT CUTTAT

THE SPIRITUAL DIALOGUE OF EAST AND WEST

With an introductory letter by

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Jacques-Albert Cuttat

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The Spiritual Dialogue of East and West

With an introductory letter by
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru

Letter of Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
to the author

Prime Minister's House
New Delhi
July 31, 1961

My dear Ambassador,

You were good enough to send me the text of the lecture you delivered at the Max Mueller Bhavan in April last. This lecture deals with a fascinating subject.

I agree with you that there is no essential contradiction between material growth and spirituality. All that can be said is that material growth may tend to distract and take away the individual's or the community's mind from spirituality. There is that danger, but there is no absolute dilemma as to which one should choose. I do believe that both are necessary. Certainly in the case of India a great deal of material growth is quite essential. I do not think it is right to expect or to work for a spiritual basis for life at the cost of physical misery. Indeed, I rather doubt if there can be a real spiritual basis with this background. It may, of course, be that too much involvement with the material aspects of life leads to a certain coarseness in the fibre of the individual of the community.

In any event, there is no way of avoiding science and its consequences in the modern world, and the only way open is to try to marry science with a spiritual approach. How far that is possible in the future I do not know. But unless this is done, science by itself may well lead to destruction.

May I add that I also agree with you that there is no fundamental conflict between the so-called East and West? They have represented different aspects of reality and we should profit by each other's thinking and past experience. In the world today which inevitably grows more compact, there is bound to be this mingling of thought. Out of this, let us hope, something good and more complete will emerge.

Yours sincerely,

Jawaharlal Nehru

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Ambassador of Switzerland, New Delhi
at Max Mueller Bhavan on 11th April 1961.

Introduction

For a diplomat, to speak in public about spirituality is unorthodox, at least according to a modern prejudice. A deplorable prejudice ! Spirituality, that is : a discipline leading to a growing awareness of ultimate values by the whole human being, draws man into his ultimate depth. Politics transform the world from without ; spirituality transforms man from within. International contacts are the play-ground of diplomacy. Why should they not take place at the level of spiritual depth ? Mircea Eliade, a Greek-Orthodox Christian and leading Orientalist, writes in this connexion : "Sooner or later, our dialogue with "others"—the representatives of traditional, Asiatic, and "primitive" cultures—must begin to take place not in today's empirical and utilitarian language...but in a cultural language capable of expressing human realities and spiritual values".[1]

Now, in concrete historical fact, spirituality is always associated with one of the various religions of the world. One could define it as the essence of a religion in so far as it is not only accepted, but lived and experienced. Thus, before we approach spirituality in general we have first to distinguish between at least two groups of spiritualities, those shaped by the so-called Western religions and those shaped by the Eastern religions.

From the point of view of the number of their respective adepts, they form also two hemispheres, two halves of mankind. Hindu-

ism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Shintoism prevail in Asia, and among them Hinduism and Buddhism are leading numerically, in extension and in spiritual quality.[2] Approximately 50% of the world's population belong to these five main Eastern religions or spiritualities. Their main common feature is to conceive the Divine, the Absolute, as being ultimately impersonal or "supra-personal". Let me call them the Eastern or Asiatic spiritual hemisphere. The other half of mankind belongs to the three religions which are predominantly (not exclusively) Western : Judaism, Christianity and Islam; they have a common root : the Bible, and share the biblical concept of God as the Absolute in Person, as ultimately personal and even inter-personal. Let me call them the biblical or monotheistic hemisphere. The exemplary expressions of the Eastern spiritualities are the wise and the yogi, those of the biblical spiritualities the prophet and the saint.

One might object to the division of mankind in religious hemispheres that it does not apply to modern humanity because, in fact, secularization makes the majority of mankind increasingly agnostic and indifferent to religion and to the corresponding spiritualities. My reply to this is not only that all cultures and civilizations, as profane and secular as they may claim to be, are still rooted in their religious past—every culture is originally religious and spiritual—but also that there is no modern atheist or agnostic who is not still, in fact, psychically shaped and spiritually stamped by his religious tradition, as much as he may call it superstitious or antiquated. Religious imprint on cultures and souls survives religious conviction and practice, privately, socially and politically. "Wise" and "yogi", "prophet" and "saint" are still in some way or other, consciously or not, the respective archetypes of East and West[3]. I remember an agnostic Jewish friend of mine, an eminent physician who said that for him ethical imperatives were but arbi-

trary human inventions from which he was fully emancipated and who, shortly after this profession of unbelief, spoke of a medical colleague as of a revolting charlatan, devoid of moral sense in his profession. Awakening to his spiritual depth in front of a concrete and serious situation, his unconscious ethical—in this case biblical—conscience spontaneously reappeared at the amoral, unbiblical surface of his consciousness. Similarly, an agnostic Indian who believes in non-violence, adheres in fact to an essentially religious category, for *ahimsa* is a specifically Hindu and Buddhist value.[4] Christian spiritual imperatives—the first to be universal after those of Buddhism—are the unacknowledged inspiration of the ardent sense for social solidarity of Western atheists. *Religio*, etymologically, means what "draws men together" as well as what "ties up" or "unites" their personal centre by "referring them back" to their common divine transcendental source; *dharma* means "directing spiritual principle" and "eternal inner law" relating all *jivatmas* (individual souls) from within to their *atma* (spiritual self), this *atma* who is *Brahma*, the "non-dual" timeless origin and goal of the Hindu way of life. Thus, our concern should be the dimension in which the wise becomes able to speak to the prophet. the yogi to the saint and vice-versa. In a view to catch the nature of their spiritual space relating East and West, let us now turn to the central point of the title of this address, to the word "dialogue".

I. The Interreligious Space of the Encounter

I. "As many summits rising from a common basis".

By spiritual dialogue of East and West I mean a communication between the biblical and the Asiatic spiritual hemispheres. A dialogue implies two irreductibly different subjects who share something fundamental. The greater the difference and even the contrast between the two partners, the deeper and higher is the only level on which they can really meet, the more genuinely uniting too. Such a spiritual contrast distinguishes the two hemispheres, as we shall explain later on, and also unites them, provided that the differences are not explained away, not abolished or fused, but more clearly perceived, confronted in order to enrich each other, to speak to each other, to meet. Their inner relation is, mutatis mutandis, analogous to the relation of love between man and woman : in a sexless third dimension, love would be less, not more uniting. In fact, confusion of sexes separates; so does confusion of cultures, religions and spiritualities. The higher the value, the more does uniformity separate and distinction unite.

As to the common ground or common spiritual basis of biblical and Asiatic religions, I would call it consciousness of the Sacred, and the Sacred, as R. Otto has convincingly shown, is a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*; it is the invisible presence of a higher Reality which paradoxically attracts and repels, lifts up and throws back, fascinates and terrifies at the same time. Whenever two represen-

tatives of our two spiritual hemispheres, e. g. a Hindu and a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim, etc., meet in this state of soul both inwardly open to their respective mode of awareness of the Sacred, then—and then only—there exists between them what I would call an interreligious space, the indispensable condition of a spiritual encounter of East and West. This space is a basis, not a summit. There is no such thing as a suprareligious approach to the various religions and spiritualities, except if one reduces religion to mere social manners and customs, an attitude which amounts to a denial of religion and therefore misses its very object. Some agnostic scholars claim that a non-religious approach to the study of comparative culture and religion is the only objective one; this amounts to claim that only those who are sceptic or ignorant about medicine have the necessary competence and objectivity to participate in an international medical congress. In other terms, the interreligious space has to be a spiritual and therefore in some way a religious space, not a religious and spiritual vacuum.

2. The requisits of a world-wide spiritual dialogue

Now, a real dialogue supposes the readiness to listen to the other as other; and to listen means to make silence in oneself in order to let the other speak to us; on the inter-spiritual plane, such listening mental silence means not less than what Husserl, the father of phenomenology and restorer of modern philosophy, calls the phenomenological *epokhe*, the "suspension of judgment", the difficult art of "placing into brackets" all ones prejudices, vague evidences, traditional assumptions, including ones religious convictions, to forget and suspend them in a view to "let the object speak", as Husserl says, i.e. to let it disclose its real essence (its *eidos*). This object, in our interreligious dialogue, is the specific essence of the

Eastern spiritualities approached by the Westerner, and the specific essence of the biblical spiritualities approached by an Oriental. This "suspension of judgement" or "placing in brackets" by no means implies the abandonment of ones convictions, but only that one abstains, for a certain time, from performing the act of faith in them, with the intention to re-open the parenthesis once the other has spoken, and then to give ones full answer to a fully understood partner, i.e. to confront both hemispheres. Two extremes have to be avoided if an interreligious dialogue has to make the spiritual essence of East and West visible to each other : the religious exclusivism (or fanaticism), which refuses to listen, to acknowledge other spiritual values, and the religious syncretism, which listens superficially and fails to grasp the uniqueness of the other as other. The West inclines to exclusivism, the East to syncretism. The view that salvation is only possible within the visible Church—a view expressly rejected by the Catholic Church—has been sustained by missionaries and eminent Christian theologians, even today; such blindness for the spiritual riches of the East, for its mystical depth and intuition of the transparence of the cosmos to higher Realities, such blindness always implies a blindness for some basic aspects of Christianity itself, namely for those aspects which it shares with all religions, e.g., the awareness of the Sacred, the value of contemplation, it supposes a value—blindness for the fact that man as such is an image of God. Thus, the well known examples of violent conversions illustrate, not Christianity, but a very unchristian aspect of Western history. The East is tempted by the opposite extreme, syncretism; it consists in wrongly equating biblical values with Eastern religious categories, e.g. in mistaking monotheistic creation (*ex nihilo*) with the Asiatic concepts of emanation or manifestation, or in calling Christ an Avatara or a great yogi, or in indentifying hastily Christian love with buddhist *maiti* or hindu *bhakti*, overlooking their specific and irreductible differences. The result of

such premature jumping to identity is that many Eastern scholars and sages, instead of studying Judaism, Christianity and even small from within and taking them phenomenologically as they are in themselves, reduce them to those aspects which are similar to the Eastern approach, isolate those aspects from their context and thus force monotheism into a sort of Eastern Prokrustes-bed. In the Gospel, f i., they read only some sayings of Jesus like : "My Father and I are one", ignoring all those where Christ stresses his being irreductibly distinct from the Father, a distinction thanks to which they are not fused nor merely identical, but each within the other, in a union which is an interpersonal communion, not a coincidence. Many Hindu or Buddhist scholars seem to know only Meister Eckhart and other more or less "monistic" mystics; they consider them as the truest expressions of the Christian message without taking the trouble to enquire why the Church warned against their identification of man and God. Such universalism is undoubtedly more tolerant, less "violent" than Western exclusivism, but equally blind to the specific inner visage of Christianity and the other biblical spiritualities. It shares with its opposite extreme the fact that it reduces the dialogue to an apparently all-embracing monologue. The integrating or "homologation" of different spiritual perspectives seems to me valid only within the realm of one hemisphere; it is correct, for instance, to equate Vedic ritual sacrifice and yoga by interpreting yoga as an inner sacrifice; buddhism may be correctly identified with a yoga transformed into o world-religion. The reason why the reduction of Eastern structural analogies to a common identity becomes invalid when extended to the biblical categories, lies in the fact that the two hemispheres form two religious families which differ not only in degree, but in nature, so much so that the difference between these hemispheres is a spiritual contrast. To get a first glimpse of this still unexplored contrast, let us try to look, "phenomenologically", at the most

typical expression of each spiritual hemisphere, the saint and the yogi. Considered in the above mentioned, a radically unbiased way, yogi and saint are two antinomical "phenomena", phenomena not in the current sense of an outward and transitory appearance, but in its etymological (and phenomenological) sense of the manifestation (*phainomenon*) of the permanent essence (*eidos*) of an object when we perceive it from within, and "antinomical" in the following sense : between a yogi and a saint, the difference is in a way much greater than that between an ordinary Hindu and an ordinary Christian, greater and yet much lesser, because whereas the spiritually mediocre Indian and Westerner share their lukewarmness and the whole scale of human passions and yet differ in such a way that they mutually exclude and possibly exterminate each other, as in religious wars, the extreme distinction between yogi and saint, their respective uniqueness, are not of an exclusive and incompatible character, but of a complementary nature. The yogi is utterly absorbed and extinguished in an impersonal Divinity, the saint is utterly confronted with the Absolute in Person. The yogi is a pure Self without any Thou, the saint is open to the divine Thou from the very depth of his Self. The yogi is liberated from ego and world, the saint is only liberated from evil. The yogi lives in "non-duality" (*advaita*), without a second, beyond relation, the saint lives face to face with God, in interpersonal communion, in extreme reciprocity. The antithesis "sage-prophet" is of a similar structure. Eastern and Western cultures have been decisively stamped by these antinomies. They are rooted in two contrasting metaphysical and anthropological backgrounds.

II. The Metaphysical Background of the Contrast

A phenomenological approach to this background will not shade off the contrast, but sharpen it, bring it into full relief and thus intensify the "dialogical tension." The abovementioned "awareness of the Sacred" is the common spiritual ground of East and West, the basis for the dialogue, yet a basis is not a summit. The respective summit will only appear gradually in the course of the dialogue. The eight main religions of the world should first be compared, phenomenologically, to as many different peaks rising from this common basis, long before we are entitled to speak of them, metaphysically, as of as many ways leading to the same summit; such may be the final result, never the initial assumption of a serious and valid confrontation. The phenomenological approach discloses the reason why some religions and cultures differ from each other in degree only, others in nature. Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism, in spite of their specific features, differ ultimately from each other in degree only; yet each of the five Eastern religions differs in nature from Judaism as well as from Christianity and from their common off-shot: Islam. The members of each group or religious family share an outlook on world, man and God which is not only different from that which the other group has in common, but symmetrically divergent.

I. Emanation - Creation, Enstasis - Ekstasis, two divergent spiritual dimensions

The divergence is conspicuous in the respective outlook at the origin and development of the universe, and, consequently, in their respective outlook at the disciplines leading to God. Practically all Asiatic cosmogonies consider the evolution of the objective cosmos not as a progress or an ascension, but, on the contrary, as a descent. Whether it is conceived as production, emanation or manifestation, the world-process as such is a perpetual departure from its divine origin toward worldy periphery; becoming is a centrifugal movement from reality to unreality; pre-cosmic plenitude unfolds itself towards periodic dissolution (*pralaya*). Therefore, the Taoist "Wheel of Things", the Buddhist "Round of Existence", the Hindu "Days and Nights of Brahma" are all not only centrifugal, but ultimately *maya*, i.e. a dream-like manifestation of the unmanifested, yet omnipresent, uniquely Real. Correspondingly, all Eastern ways leading to the Divine—the Eastern spiritualities strictly speaking—consist of an inner counteract which neutralizes this centrifugal evolution by a symmetrically inverse involution. Yoga, Buddhist jnana, zen and taoist meditation are all a movement backward, an inner return to the pre-cosmic, pre-temporal Reality. This implies a radical detachment from the world as such, not only from evil, as from peripherical illusion, including the empirical ego. The first and last word of Eastern spirituality is concentration in the etymological sense of a "concentric retreat" towards the Divine Centre abiding in oneself, not coinciding with ones Self; Asiatic spiritualities aim at total interiorization. This spiritual orientation impresses to some extent all Eastern inner relations to values, particularly to finite values.

In Judaism, Christianity and Islam, both these movements have an

exactly opposite orientation. Their common holy Scripture, the Bible, describes the world-evolution not as centrifugal, but as theocentric, centripetal, not as descending from God, but as ascending towards God according to the scheme (or Divine Plan) prefigured by the "six days of the Genesis"; during these six world-periods, universal existence emerges first from non-being ("nothing") to inanimate (mineral) existence, then progresses to vegetal and animal life and finally culminates in man as in an epitome of the cosmos as well as a free image of God, so that through man the whole cosmos can and should culminate in God. Thus, biblical becoming, even of the outer world, is not essentially a production, an emanation, a manifestation in the Eastern sense; not a production out of some pre-existing matter, but a total invention—including matter—out of nothing; not an emanation, a flowing out of an impersonal Divinity towards illusion, but a progress, a growth proceeding, not down from God, but up from nothing to God, rising through impersonal life towards an increasingly personal Reality; nor even a manifestation, a necessary unfolding of the "possibilities" of a unique Reality, but the result of a free Act of the absolute Person, in one word: a real creation. Creation places an intrinsically real world and free creatures in front of an ultimately personal Creator. Therefore, Judaic, Christian and Islamic salvation or sanctification—i. e. monotheistic ways of union with God—are, accordingly, not an inner ascending recession from world and ego, but an ascending inner progression with world and ego, a spiritual movement forward towards a divine Thou, not a spiritual retreat into a pure Self; a fulfilment of creation by achieving its growth inaugurated by God, not a neutralization of the world-process. The basic inner gesture here is recollection before God, confrontation, not pure concentration within ; full response to all values whether infinite or finite, not an interiorization of the finite.

The Eastern spiritual gesture of radical interiorization is at once physically symbolized—and inwardly induced by the main yoga postures, by the suspension of breath, by the withdrawal of the senses from their objects (*pratyahara*); it is unsurpassably expressed by the statues of Lord Buddha; so do similarly the Jewish, Christian and Islamic liturgy and prayers outwardly transcribe as well as impress on the soul the monotheistic, complementary "protreptic" (forward-leading) inner orientation. Both are *mudras* (sacred gestures) suggesting self-transcendence, there a selftrans-cending assimilation of cosmic rythms by re-absorbing them into ones pre-cosmic Self, here a selftranscendence leading from within towards the supra-cosmic interiority of God or of ones neighbour loved as God's image; both convey the experience of a paradoxical omnipresence, there the paradox of an omnipresent "blissfull solitude" (*kaivalya*), here the paradox of faith and hope in an omnipresent, providential, yet increasingly unpredictable "diviniz-ing Love".

The ultimate goal of all Asiatic sacred gestures, symbols, myths, ascetic scriptures and disciplines are summed up in Shankaracharya's famous sentence: "The liberated Sage contemplates everything (including God as Person) as remaining within himself". The ultimate trend of monotheistic social achievements, art, poetry, liturgy, mysticism, holiness are summarized, as it were, in Christ's injunction: "He who looses his soul (i.e. himself) unto Me, will find it". The essence of Asiatic spiritualities *is en-stasis*, that of the biblical hemisphere is *ek-stasis*. Now en-stasis, a word coined to translate *samadhi*, means literally "abiding within", to wit : within ones non-dual, thou-less, transpersonal self. *Ek-stasis*, literally "abiding outside", means, in its classical sense, to have transferred ones innermost abode into the depth of the Absolute in person, into God as an ultimate, unsurpassable Thou. The I-Thou relation

is experienced in *en-stasis* as a limiting duality surmounted by the knowledge of boundless Non-Duality, in *ek-stasis* as a deep polarity endlessly deepened and transfigured by infinite Love. *Enstasis* is transcendent pure interiority, impersonal selftranscendence, supreme Identity; *ekstasis* is transcendent, *reciprocal* interiority, interpersonal self-transcendence, supreme Communion.

2. Supreme Identity - Supreme Communion, an antinomical polarity

I consider these two spiritual dimensions of mankind as ultimate and as the only two ultimately authentic; any attempt to reduce them to a third common denominator is vain spiritual obscurantism. If, on the contrary, I endeavoured to press the contrast, it is because at the very moment in which the two extremes—pure and reciprocal interiority, Identity and Communion, Eastern Self, biblical Thou—reach the climax of their divergence, one discovers that they call for each other. Obviously, reciprocal interiority, far from excluding pure interiority, implies it; obviously, supreme Identity can and should remain open to supreme Communion, *enstasis* to *ekstasis*. Their deepest, inner relation is not that of an alternative, but that of a transcendent spiritual tension, somehow comparable to the complementary tension relating the two poles of a magnetic field. The apparent contradiction culminates in an *antinomy*, i.e. in a paradox meant to remain insoluble as an intellectual problem –and to be solved only when approached as supra-rational mystery, an approach which transforms and unifies mind and heart by keeping them indefinitely open to the Infinite. Such a supreme inter-religious tension can only develop its latent spiritual energies when it is not suppressed or ignored, as exclusivists think, nor reduced, as syncretists and exclusivists think alike.

If that is so, two questions arise, perhaps the two crucial questions of the spiritual encounter of East and West, namely :

(1) Is our meeting with Eastern spiritualities, religions and civilizations not a providential challenge for the extravert modern West to place at a deeper level of his consciousness the starting point of his relation to God, to the universe and to man ? And as both hemispheres have a common sacred ground, does that challenge not at the same time remind the West of a forgotten or neglected dimension of its own tradition ?

(2) Is not, conversely this growing spiritual and cultural interpenetration of the two hemispheres a providential challenge for Asia to revive in its turn undeveloped traditional energies and thus to discover new or disregarded spiritual horizons, particularly those referring to interpersonal communion at the highest level, a level where the yogi, in spite of the universal dimensions of his consciousness, remains ultimately solitary ?

A tentative answer to these two questions requires a glimpse at the history of the Encounter, first of the West with spiritual Asia, then of the East with the biblical West.

III. The West-Eastern Dialogue

As surprising as it may sound, such an authentic dialogue has already taken place long ago in the West. Prepared since the 4th century B.C. by social, cultural and even spiritual contacts between India and the pre-Christian Western Antiquity, these still largely unexplored initial relations of the West with Asia came to a spiritual culmination during the first five or six centuries of Christianity, namely in the *patristic period*, the period of the "Fathers of the Church", some of whom are spiritual giants. In their quality as inspired interpreters of Judeo-Christian Revelation, they elaborated the huge edifice of Christian doctrine on the threefold foundation of Greek beauty and philosophy, of Roman sense for justice and political order, and—last but not least—of Hellenistic mysteries, gnostic speculations and other Near-Eastern religious intuitions. Since the secularizing Renaissance, the Greek and Roman elements of Christian doctrine and Western civilization have been overstressed at the cost of the Hellenistic, specifically mystical element. In fact, its Hellenistic background has also contributed to shape decisively the basic categories and inner unity of the Occident. And what has been even more and is still widely ignored under the narrowing influence of a certain Western spiritual provincialism is the fact that this Hellenistic building-stone of Christian culture, specially the neo-platonist metaphysics of Alexandria, is in reality an Asiatic spiritual dimension of the patristic thought and therefore of the West.

I. The Augustinian Synthesis

Let me illustrate this by the spiritual evolution of the greatest thinker of Christian Antiquity, Saint Augustine, the most powerful architect of Western spirituality, culture and civilization after Saint John and Saint Paul. His famous conversion (in Milano in 386) is too often described as a sudden leap from Manicheism, a rather materialistic form of Gnosticism, to pure Christianity. One has not given due consideration to the fact that at the end of his Manichean period and shortly before his dramatic conversion, Augustine had discovered Plotinus, the summit of neo-platonism, whose influence is crucial on Christian and Islamic spirituality (Meister Eckhart and Ibn Arabi, for instance, are deeply plotinian), an influence of which Augustine was one of the main channels. Indeed, Augustine did not only read some books of Plotinus, he confesses that through them he awakened for the first time to the knowledge of an immutable and absolutely spiritual God. Now, modern scholars of Plotinus agree that his philosophy and cosmology is surprisingly close to Vedanta, closer than to Aristotle and even Plato. The plotinian world-process is an emanation and manifestation of the divine Unity, unfolding itself simultaneously as macrocosme or "great (outer) universe" and microcosme or "small (inner) universe", strictly related to each other in such a way that the human body corresponds analogically to the whole physical universe, that the individual soul is a counterpart of the "cosmic soul" and the human spirit a counterpart of the universal Intellect (*Nous*); these two parallel horizontally connected hierarchies are in their turn vertically related to the transcendent "One" by an inner ontological continuity deriving from their ultimate identity. Like in Vedanta, the way leading to this supreme Identity of all subjects and objects in their thou-less precosmic Reality is an ascending concentric retreat, a contemplative withdrawal from all objects

including the empirical ego; plotinian spirituality is a way back to the primordial coincidence of the divine Centre of the universe with ones own innermost divine centre. This blissfull coincidence, often wrongly described as *ek-stasis*, is in fact a radial *en-stasis*, a pure interiorization, a *samadhi*, which Plotinus has known four times. According to recent researches, Augustine practised this plotinian *en-stasis* several times, and his conversion took place *after* those mystical experiences. Now, his conversion was nothing but an overwhelming encounter with the personal God of the Bible, with the Absolute in Person, experienced in faith as transcending even metaphysical unity and ultimate interiority. He describes this absolute transcendance in his Confession, (written in 399), the only metaphysical and theological treatise written throughout, not about God, but to God. In other terms, Augustine, even after having reached a pure inwardness of the Eastern type, remained confronted with God as absolute, Thou because, as he says in a sentence which became classical for Christian spirituality : "Thou, Lord, was more interior to my innermost and superior to my summit". His plotinian "pure interiority" blossomed out in "mutual interiority", his union with God culminated, not in fusion, but in communion. Such ultimate "transcending of ones self", as Augustine says, this selftranscending towards the other became decisive for the Western concept of the human person as basically interpersonal. As Gabriel Marcel says : "to exist as a person means to make oneself by surpassing oneself towards another person". The example of Augustine's conversion shows, among many others of the patristic period, that Christian spirituality, far from excluding or rejecting Eastern spirituality, has in fact been deepened and enriched by it, but it also shows that this is only true when this East–"West" dialogue takes place at the spiritual summit of both hemispheres.

2. The Modern Resumption of the Encounter

After the patristic period, the Christian dialogue with spiritual Asia came to an end for more than a thousand years; from about the seventh to the eighteenth century, Europe remains culturally and spiritually isolated from Asia. Not that Asia was absent, but its presence to European thought remained "incognito". Spiritual Asia, as it were, went underground. Its presence took many disguised forms, for instance the plotinian influence on Christian mystics and philosophers (Eckhart, Tauler, Suso[5], Spinoza, Boehme), or occult movements like the Cathars, the Patarins, the Illuminados, the Brothers of the free spirit, the hermetists and alchemists of the Renaissance and other occultists. Its most important incognito was the Eastern interiority as a dimension integrated in European thought itself. In spite of numerous geographic, economic, and even religious contacts and exchanges since the 16th century, it was not before the end of the 18th century that European *intelligentia* began to know Asia from within. Then only Asia's spiritual incognito was suddenly unveiled by the publication of the first translations of its Sacred Books, of the Upanishads, of the Bhagavad Gita and later of Buddhist and Taoist Scriptures. The impact on European mind of this huge discovery was tremendous. Nothing describes it better than the expression "Oriental Renaissance" (borrowed from Schopenhauer by R. Schwab), for like the Renaissance of pre-christian Antiquity in the 16th century, this discovery was a rediscovery; it was the rediscovery, but this time far beyond the sea, of the same Asia which has lived unperceived in Western souls for twelve hundred years; a sort of collective psychological shock resulted from the disclosure, not of a bygone Antiquity, but of a living world of deep religiosity, high mystical insights, ascetic heroism, immemorial myths and symbols entirely new and yet strangely familiar to us; Asia emerged

before our eyes like a distant mirror reflecting in magnified proportion our own forgotten past. Europe realised abruptly how much spirituality is inherent to all men and to all cultures of all times. Our dialogue with the Eastern spiritual hemisphere started anew on a much broader scale. From the point of view of the interreligious encounter, the 19th and 20th centuries are closer to the patristic period than the twelve centuries lying between them. The first leader of the new dialogue was the founder of the German romantic School, the sanscritist Friedrich von Schlegel, soon joined by Herder, Goethe, Novalis, Schelling, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, later by Wagner and Nietzsche. The revival of idealism in philosophy and the rise of romanticism in Western literature and art are unthinkable without this encounter with the sacred East. Baron Eckstein whom Heine surnamed "Baron Buddha" shifted this wave of enthusiasm from Germany to France. Victor Hugo, Michelet, Lamartine, Vigny, the symbolist poets were — at least temporarily — overwhelmed by the Oriental Renaissance. However, our second dialogue with Asia started in a rather chaotic way. The brilliant and passionate French philosopher — Priest Lamennais — had to be condemned by Rome for threatening to dissolve Christianity in a boundless and timeless ocean of vaguely known Oriental religions. Most of the leading Western thinkers, largely dechristianized, had lost the pearl of Greco-Christian heritage: the truly spiritual approach to rationally unsoluble paradoxes and antinomies by "thinking in tension", the intellectual faculty "to distinguish without separating" in order "to unite without merging"[6]). Thus, no mutual understanding, no real encounter was possible between the "pro-Western" and the "pro-Eastern" European partners of the new East-West Dialogue, both being incapable to disclose the viewpoint of the other by "suspending" its own. In the pro-Western camp, the spiritual horizon was narrowed by self-righteousness and the wrong identi-

fication of the universality of the Bible with that of Western culture; in the pro-Eastern camp, composed mainly by agnostic philosophers (Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, also Hegel), occultists and theosophists, the outlook was restricted by resentments against Western civilization and against the Church as well as by a more or less conscious desire to elude the burden of the *ego* and of biblical ethics by escaping into a supra-moral and supra-biblical, allegedly Eastern, mostly self-fabricated gnosticism "beyond good and evil", "beyond all religions". Our new encounter with spiritual Asia started as a dialogue of deafs.

A great deal of order came into the matter thanks to Frazers "Golden Bough" and to the publication in Oxford (from 1859 onward), by the great Max Muller, of the *Sacred Books of the East*. This monumental collection of 49 volumes, together with the works of the French sanscritists, provided at last the scientific basis for an impartial comparison between the main religions of the world, a field in which great scholars among missionaries (like Abbe Duhois) had been the first patient pioneers. The first university chair of history of religions was founded in Geneva in 1873, an example soon followed by other universities of Switzerland and by those of The Netherlands, France and Germany, then of England and America. Among the Pleiad of brilliant authors who brought comparative religion into the realm of science in the 20th century, I mention here only H. E. Dr. Radhakrishnan, because his "Spalding Lectures" at Oxford—published in 1939 under the title : "Eastern Religion and Western Thought"—are the work of the first Asiatic appointed to a Western university chair. The rapidly growing interpenetration of Eastern and Western cultures made an authentic dialogue more and more urgent and unavoidable. The scientific approach is a necessary condition for it, but not a sufficient one, or objective information is one thing, objective confrontation and

judgement is quite another thing. It requires an approach from within, i.e. a minimum of spiritual life. Such approach has followed in this century three very different lines corresponding, again to the two already analysed extremes and to a more difficult middle path.

3. Three Western today : defensive (exclusivistic), surrendering (syncretistic) and "dialogical" (receiving)

Brilliant authors like H. Massis and A. Koestler (in his recent *The Lotus and the Robot*), "conservative" writers and many theologians and missionaries treat Eastern spirituality as inferior or pagan in a scornful sense; their exclusivism is less aggressive, proselytic and self-assured than the old one, more defensive and somewhat depressed, but equally isolating. Concern for the threatened humanistic culture rather than for the Christian spiritual universality from which it sprang, an often high but one-sighted religiosity and a certain lack of intellectual charity makes them feel uncomfortable in front of the truth expressed by Augustine as follows : "The very thing which is now called the Christian religion ... never failed from the beginning of human race up to the coming of Christ in flesh. Then the true religion which already existed began to be called Christianity". (Retractationes, I, 13). In the second, syncretistic line, the defense of Western values has capitulated, as it were, in favour of the opposite extreme, that of surrender to Eastern values; it is the approach of universally minded and highly gifted thinkers like A. Huxley, R. Guenon and to a certain extent A. Toynbee; there, the common sacred ground, the *basic* unity of Eastern and biblical spiritualities is sweepingly transformed into a coincidence, identity or fusion of their respective *summits;* universality is mistaken for absence of determination, because the approach is unilaterally intellectual, inhumanly metaphysical and therefore also spiritually incomplete.[7] They forget that "the

dignity of man consists, as Pascal says, not in surmounting his limits but in becoming conscious of them"; in their anti-Western eagerness to reconstruct intellectually with Eastern elements an esoteric Christianity (or Judaism, or Islam), they indulge in an unconsciously "magic" play of inter-religious equivalences and often artificial equations, overlooking that, as Aristotle wrote, "true equality consists in treating unequally unequal things".—I call the third approach "dialogical" because, by avoiding either of the two first extremes, its aim is a mutual encounter, a real dialogue. It has been undertaken—with unequal success—by men whose biblical faith did not close, as in the first case, but open their eyes to all spiritual values of the Orient, and whose loving knowledge of the East did not weaken, as in the second case, but deepen their biblical spirituality, be genuine Christians as well as genuine scholars like R. Otto, H. Kraemer, Tillich, A. Schweizer, de la Vallee Pousain, O. Lacombe, H. de Lubac, M. Eliade, R. C. Zaehner (the successor of Dr. Radhakrishnan at Oxford), in India itself the Fathers Dandoy and Johanns S. J., the late samnyasi-abbot Mouchanin and his followers today[8]; they all endeavour, in various degrees, to look at Brahma and Buddha through Christain eyes, as well as at Christ through Hindu or Buddhist eyes.

They respond to the Eastern challenge by an inner gesture which is neither a defense nor a surrender of their own spiritual heritage, but a real answer, arising out of more, not of less faith and love, a full monotheistic reply. As our Eastern spiritual brother is first of all created in the image of the same God, some of these writers think that we should first of all listen to them and to their scriptures as to possible messengers of a challenge addressed *to ourselves* by the very God of the Bible. Consequently, our first question should be : "What message is conveyed to us through the East ?", and not : "What is our message to the East ?", a question

which comes only after the first, if the spiritual dialogue has to be genuinely spiritual and a genuine dialogue. Then only does the encounter find its interreligious "sacred space" in which the highest values of both hemispheres can freely circulate. How much Western spirituality can be and has been enriched by this inner attitude is clearly shown by the already mentioned example of Augustine, whose eminently biblical union with God was deepened by "assuming" the eminently Eastern dimension of interiority.

There are other Eastern spiritual riches of providential significance for the monotheistic hemisphere. I would centre them around an intuition largely forgotten in the West, the intuition of *symbolism* in its full and genuine meaning, the sense of the symbolic *essence* of all things.

4. Biblical Realism enhanced by Eastern Symbolism

A symbol in its true sense (still alive in the traditional East) is not a conventional sign, it is the finite expression of the infinite, the only means to evoke and convey Realities which cannot be expressed directly. In this perspective, the world around us, things, plants, landscapes, animals, men, the sky, are not only what they are in themselves or in relation to us, but also what they *signify*, what they are in relation to their ultimate eternal source. Modern science and technology have their root in the biblical conception of man called to rule over nature, to be the free king of a world created as real in itself, not as illusion ; if the conquest of nature is divorced from its spiritual finality, if man's transforming power, ceasing to be his act as a free image of divine Freedom, becomes an end instead of a means to glorify God by freely conforming the world to God's creative call, as it happened in the post-medieval West, then the human domination of things,

because merely human, becomes promethean, i.e., ungodly and therefore also inhuman. In such de-spiritualised technocratic civilization, man, confronted only with products of human skill, lives in a world which refers him no more to its spiritual dimensions, but only to himself, a spiritually opaque world of egocentric structure. Eastern landscapes, villages and small towns, not to speak of Hindu and Buddhist sacred places, on the contrary, still seem to point to a Reality beyond them and beyond the empirical ego; nature, customs and dresses are, as it were, more *transparent* to the Sacred than ours, a fact which explains the tremendous appeal to modern Westerners of books and exhibitions on Asiatic art, traditions and landscapes. They fill a gap, they satisfy the same spiritual nostalgy as do in the West the monuments of medieval sacred art. Profane Western music, poetry and art are a vicarious refuge for this ontological longing which, in the West, is only fully appeased in liturgy. These two Western parallels to Eastern symbolism—medieval art and liturgy—clearly show that the true lesson of the Eastern world of myths and symbols to the spiritually starved Westerners is not to escape from the allegedly sinking ship of traditional Occident into a mysterious oriental paradise, but to restore and integrate into modern perspective our own traditional symbols enriched by Asiatic dimensions, to revive the biblical transparency of the universe to the Divine, more precisely : to arouse from the subconscious and to re-integrate the biblical vision of creation as a "cosmic liturgy", i. e. as a universal *symbol* which is *also* and ultimately an *interpersonal message*, because its divine model is an absolute Person, Eastern symbolism is a challenge to renew, at the magnified scale of modern science and technique, Saint Paul's awareness of man's responsibility for the destiny of the universe, of man's mandate to fulfill the world's culmination in God as in its creative and attracting Pole. Should we not respond by striving to remake, at this enlarged

scale, the old franciscan, remarkably cosmical experience of the sun, the moon and the elements as our real brothers and sisters, i.e. as omnipresent manifestations of an inaccessibly transcendent and yet eminently paternal creative power.

If the absolute distance between creation and Creator is an inter-personal distance, an absolute relation, a supra-cosmic infinite in which God posits in front of him free creatures and a real world made out of nothing, as in the metaphysics of the Bible, then the world can become transparent to the Divine without being reduced to an unreal mirage, it remains fully real, a real symbol which, by its very subsisting finite reality, far from relativizing the absolute reality of the infinite Model, suggests and enhances its inconceiveably greater reality.

5. Christian experience of Incarnation enriched by Hindu Approach to Avataras

In Christian view, this "symbolic" transparency of the finite reality to its infinitely more real Model reaches its climax in Christ, the God-Man, the supreme Paradox in whom all relative and temporal relation of symbols to the Absolute become themselves absolute and eternal. Totally divine and totally human in one and the same infinite person, Christ, in Christian experience, is in person, words and deeds the absolute symbol of the Absolute, the Face of God, the objectively incarnated mirror of the "Abyss of the Father", i. e. of the transobjective depths of God. Krishna and Rama are Avataras of Vishnu, i. e. "descents" or "manifestations" of the Divine, they are not, in Hindu view, real incarnations. The commonly accepted translation of *avatara* by "incarnation" is superficial and utterly misleading, because Krishna and Rama are not described as having really suffered and died; in the Avatara,

God does not, as for Christians in Christ, become really man, he only appears in human form and remains, behind and beyond this earthly appearance, purely divine and unaffected by human vicissitudes. The concept of Incarnation, whatever syncretists may think, has to be sharply distinguished from the concept of Avatara, yet only distinguished in order to unite both at a deeper level, like all true values, not in view to separate or isolate them from each other, whatever Christian exclusivists may think. To understand this, the Christian should have the intellectual charity to look at an Avatara with Hindu eyes, an effort rewarded by a richer experience of the very Christian contemplation itself, which always consists in looking at Christ.

Now, the great Ramakrishna helps us immensly in such effort because, right or wrong, he considered Christ as an Avatara as much as Kali, Rama, Krishna and Mohammed. This peak of Hindu mysticism, who was an open book, clearly tells us how a Hindu contemplates inwardly an Avatara. In 1885, after having meditated for three days on the life of Jesus, a human form appeared to him, drew nearer to him, and he heard an inner voice addressing his vision : "Redeemer", "Incarnated Love" and "Master Yogi"; now, the decisive point is that this figure became gradually absorbed in Ramakrishna, disappeared as an "object", and, once fully interiorised, arose in him the experience of *samadhi*, i.e. the mystical awareness of the ultimate identity of his own innermost self with the divine self of the Avatara. In other words, the Avatara is not an objective Thou, as Christ is, but a symbol in the highest sense which Asia gives to this word, namely a sacred, but mythical, i. e. ultimately unreal, dream-like support of radical interiorization, an evanescent sacred mirror of *one's own* divine self. This shows at once the difference, the analogy and the complementarity between an Avatara and Christ. No Christian looks at Christ in view to

absorb him even in his highest self, nor does he intend to merge in Christ, nor even to merge with him in God ; obviously two historically individualized persons cannot fuse or merge, nor can two real spiritual persons, whether human or divine, and this is precisely what the historicity of Christ, the unique "individuality" of the God-man, suggests and makes obvious. This, by the way, points at the basic differences between Christian love and Hindu *bhakti*, for *bhakti* aims at a final fusion with God, whereas Christian *agape* does not wish to abolish the distance from man to God or Christ, it intends on the contrary to deepen this infinite interpersonal distance because it is the very breathing-space of a more infinite Love.[9] However, the fact that Christ's unique historicity prevents His reduction to a timeless myth, and obliges the serious Christian to consider Him as being either a charlatan or a historical, i. e. irreductibly objective manifestation of God as absolute Thou, the fact, in other terms, that Christ is a symbol, and more than a symbol, shows that He is *also* and *a fortiori* a symbol in the full Eastern sense of the word, for the more implies the less. Thus, when we look with Hindu eyes at the Incarnation in its full Christian sense, Eastern spirituality helps us to remember, to actualize and to understand better certain neglected or wrongly understood Christian truths like Paul's exclamation : "It is not I who lives, but Christ within me", or Christ himself when he says: "The Kingdom of heaven lies within you". It discloses Christ as being *also* a perfect symbol in the Eastern sense of a holy mirror which by reflecting objectively, by making paradoxically visible pre-conscious regions of the soul, refers us back to dimensions of interiority otherwise inexorably hidden to ourselves, but always confronted, and thus awakens us to the incommunicable mystery of the person in the Christian sense of the word. This ultimate personal centre to which Christian contemplation arouses, because it is incommunicable and therefore incapable of fusion or merge, has a degree

of interiority higher than that of the *bhakta* and closer to that of the *advaitin* ; the *advaitin* ways towards "non-dual" identity of Self (*atma*) and Brahma by pure "knowledge" (*jnana*) discloses an inwardness which is also incommunicable and beyond "bhaktic" fusion, and in this sense more truly personal, but it remains unconfronted, totally thou-less, whereas Christian contemplation, at this very point, becomes utterly inter-personal by opening totally to the inwardness of God's infinite Thou.[10] This shows the deep polarity by which the two hemispheres are distinguished and united. In brief, the main spiritual gift of Asia to the monotheistic hemisphere consist in compelling us, as it were, not at all to abandon or to reduce our ultimately interpersonal approach to God, but to place its starting-point at a more and more interior sphere of the soul. A providential lesson, indeed to so many modern monotheists who dare to approach the absolute Person from a peripherical, mundane, superficial and "mediocre" sphere of their consciousness and tend to conform God to the image of man instead of conforming man to the image and resemblance of God.

IV. The East–Western Dialogue

If that is true, I can hardly help now—in spite of my lack of competence—to examine our Encounter from the opposite side, from the Eastern point of view, at least in principle. In principle, I fail to see any reason why the spiritual East could not in its turn open itself from within to the biblical hemisphere, why it should not also reach out for its complementary values and accept to be enriched by them, especially by those enhancing the interpersonal sphere and the objective side of reality.

1. No Full Encounter up to the End of the 19th Century

To this, Hindus and Buddhists often object that all these biblical values and approaches are already included in their tradition and scriptures and even surpassed by them; this attitude reminds of the defensive reaction of Christian exclusivists in the opposite sense; the irresistibly growing presence of the West in Asia should rather induce them, not to stop at the afore-said assumption, but to check it. Even if it is true, Hindus, Buddhist and other Asiatics have nothing to loose, but only to gain by reacting to the spiritual West as to a providential challenge to revive some of their own traditional dimensions which Asia—also spiritual Asia—may have forgotten or neglected in the long course of its immemorial history, those dimensions namely which the West, otherwise also forgetful of its tradion, has kept alive and developed, Why should Asia refuse a

dialogue in which the only thing which both spiritual hemispheres are asked to give up is their ignorance about each other ?

If we now turn to concrete facts, i.e. to Indian history, we see that India's real dialogue with the spiritual West is not older than about 80 years and that this interreligious encounter is intimately related with India's political rise to national independence, with India's awakening to the full awareness of its indivisibly cultural and political personality i. e. of its *international* vocation. India's first confrontation with the spiritual West as a whole increased her national selfconsciousness, which in its turn inclined India to join the spiritual dialogue. Up to the end of the 19th century, the monotheistic — Jewish, Christian and Moslem — communities of India lived side by side with Hindus and Buddhists, tolerated by them, but also spiritually unrelated to them. In tolerant India, there is no such thing as the thirteen centuries old Chinese anti-Christian tradition. Whether the Jewish, Christian and Moslem communities originated in India by immigration, conversion or invasion, the relation in India of monotheism with the Asiatic spiritual hemisphere was mainly that of two or more co-existing monologues. In the 16th century Emperor *Akbar*, who according to Max Muller was "the first who ventured a comparative study of the religions of the world"[11], organized inter religious debates which were not continued by his successors and had no lasting impact. In the 17th century the bold attempt of the Jesuit Father *De Nobili* to start a full Hindu Christian dialogue was turned down in Rome by his Dominican opponents. Indian sufism is not a mutual hindu-monotheistic encounter, but rather an absorption of the moslem concept of a personal God by the Hindu ways towards an impersonal Divinity, a sort of conversion of Islam to Hindu spirituality, and a conversion as such is not the beginning of a dialogue, but rather the end of it, especially in old India.

2. Vivekananda's opening of the Dialogue

The real encounter of Hindu spirituality with Christianity, prepared by *Ramakrishna* in 1885 in the way described above, started with his ardent disciple *Vivekananda*. Received as a spiritual hero by the World-Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, Vivekananda conveyed to the West the message of the universality of Hinduism in which all religions seemed to him to converge as into a supra-religious spiritual synthesis; at the same time, however, he absorbed in the West, more and more consciously, some true biblical values which were new to him and less easy to integrate into his synthesis than he had first assumed. He had inherited from his Master a spiritual plasticity which enabled him to be impressed by the specifically biblical stress on the highly spiritualizing nature of a relation to God — and through God to the neighbour—conceived, not as ultimately impersonal, but as ultimately inter-personal. He seems to have growingly realized that this concept implies, in apparent contradiction to Hinduism, that the objective side of the universe corresponds to something ultimately real, not reductible to a dream. It was the biblical hemisphere which made Vivekananda increasingly, albeit reluctantly, aware that the world of concrete things and concrete persons which confronts us is a place for spiritualizing action, not only of spiritualizing detachment, a place made for a spirituality of response to finite positive values, not only of global retreat from the finite as a bulk of disvalues ; he never forgot his first glimpse at a world approached as real creation to be fulfilled by man's co-creative cooperation with its Creator, where space and time, where God-intended dimensions in which and by which finite things have to be done, not merely to be undone and dissolved in a spaceless and timeless Beyond. He also saw that all these values and perspectives, in spite of being contained in some way or other

in the Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita and the Puranas, had been treated as belonging to a lower level and thus remained basically foreign to Hindu and Buddhist social consciousness. In an excessively severe judgement he writes : "No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such lofty strains as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the neck of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism".[12]

His familiarity with the West induced him to attempt the revival of those neglected interpersonal values by developing the Hindu "Way of love" (*bhakti-marga*) on partially Christian lines and by laying unprecedented stress on the social aspect of the Hindu spiritual way of action (*karma-marga*), described by the Gita as action done with an inner detachment and renunciation of its fruits and as work dedicated to Krishna. Vivekananda's untiring exhortations to his people all over India started a movement conversely similar to the above-mentioned "Oriental Renaissance" in Europe and which might be called a "monotheistic Renaissance" in Asia. He met strong resistance provoked by the inveterated Indian tendency consisting in either loving the world too much, too egoistically, when they are profane or in the two first stages of the Hindu way of life, or, —once they awaken to spirituality or enter the last stages, to make an abrupt inner volte-face by which they turn entirely away from the world, from social responsibilities, work and fellow-beings considered as a *maya* devoid of spiritual value.

Leading Indians today, desirous to see India achieve industrialization and material and social progress without abandoning its spirituality, see no way out of the following dilemma: should India keep its traditional virtue of contentment at the price of backwardness and starvation, or accept and even foster discontentment as a necessary incitement to material progress, even at the price of materialism and gradually extermination of India's spiritual personality ?

3. Progress and Spirituality : Nehru, Aurobindo, Tagore, Radhakrishnan, Gandhi

This seems to me a wrong alternative. The problem is not one of contentment or discontentment, but one of a new *spiritual* approach to the outer world, of a new inner relation to objects breeding contentment without indifference and productive activity without discontentment nor restless activism. To achieve this aim, India should perhaps boldly proceed on the way paved by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda by endeavouring to integrate more and more into *yoga* and *sadhana* all human relations to concrete objects and to the interpersonal, eminently ethical sphere ? This realm of objective values, material or personal, which tend to be ignored or underestimated by the Hindu and Buddhist sweeping ways of liberation based on the equation of existence and suffering, this realm of finite yet true spiritual values fully disclosed by the biblical concepts of creation, incarnation and redemption, should only be transcended after having been fully acknowledged as such and inwardly assimilated; for all true values belong to God, all are spiritualising, all have to be taken seriously; to ignore them by a premature leap to pure interiority may deliver from the world, but might also make blind for God's infinite richness, it might impoverish spiritually, not only materially. This shows that India's technical and social progress, by developing instinctively a more positive, more spiritually integrating relation to matter and neighbour, could indirectly open Indian eyes and hearts to many hitherto unperceived theocentric dimensions of daily life; however the result will only be spiritual and not materialistic if pandits and gurus rethink and deepen all moral implications of *bhakti*-and *karma-marga*.[13] Would they ask the West and obtain from it to perform its technical assistance with a minimum of awareness of the

providential spiritual complementarity between both hemispheres, our economic cooperation would become a part of the East-Western spiritual dialogue and receive its full significance. I like to think that this is what Pandit *Nehru* has more and more in mind in his repeated recent statements by which, quoting Vinobha Bhave, he declares science without spirituality as immoral and exhorts to unite them.

A spiritual Master of India whose long stay in the West enriched him precisely in this direction is the late Shri Aurobindo; once retired from his political career after an overwhelming mystical experience in prison, he undertook to combine the Hindu cosmogony of descending emanation with the eminently biblical concept of the world process as a basically ascending evolution. This also was the result, not of a mere importation of Western perspectives, as some have thought, but of a revival and expension of the old puranic doctrine of the ten successive Avataras of Vishnu. These periodical multiform descents of the compassionate Vishnu, the cyclical saviour of this world periodically threatened with decadence and destruction, follow a movement upward from Fish and Tortoise to higher animals, from those to Dwarf and full human forms, the two last of which are Krishna and — at the end of this aeon — the Kalki-Avatara. As far as I know, never before the recently started dialogue of India with the West had the attempt been made to extend this ascending movement of the whole cosmos.

Rabindranath *Tagore*, this mighty Bengali tree opening freely its branches upward, eastward and westwards as all trees deeply rooted in their native soil, depicts a Sannyasi who, brought back by a little girl from pure inwardness into the play of life, discovers that "the great is to be found in the small, the infinite within the bounds of form and the eternal freedom of the soul in love".[14]

Tagore, writes Jawaharlal Nehru "has been India's internationalist per excellence... taking India's message to other countries and bringing their messages back to his own people".[15] His revolutionary insistance on life as a great gift, his vision of love as the essence of interpersonal communion, sound more biblical than Hindu to Western ears, yet Tagore untiringly disclosed them as the main intention of Hindu Scriptures.

All these recent spiritual tendencies and achievements, all these new outlooks and new remembrances, born of India's talking and listening to the West, converge in the philosophical works of the Vice-President of India. Dr. *Radhakrishnan's* brilliant writings seem to me to prepare the ground for a synthesis which has yet to be achieved within Hinduism itself and which would greatly help the dialogue to become a full and reciprocal Encounter of the hemispheres at their spiritual summits : the synthesis of *Vaishnavism* and *Shaivism*, that is of the Hindu way of love (*bhakti-marga*) and of the Hindu way of "knowledge" (*jnana-marga*) in other words: the synthesis of God approached as the Absolute in Person and of God conceived as the impersonal Absolute. These two antithetic Hindu spiritualities appear to me to be still somewhat unrelated, perhaps because they are not sharply enough distinguished.

Mahatma *Gandhi*, a great admirer of Ramakrishna, is sometimes said to have "received from the Sermon of the Mount his doctrine of non-violence".[16] This view is contradicted by the fact that Gandhi, when asked in 1909 by Reverend Doke about the origin of his concept of *ahimsa*, quoted the following old Hindu verses which he had learned at home in Gujarati : "For a drink, give back a full meal, for a greeting honours without number... The truly noble knows only brothers, he retaliates evil with goodness".

However, equally wrong seems the opposite view (defended by O. Wolff, loc. cit.) declaring Gandhiji's concept of non-violence entirely devoid of Christian influence. Pro-Western exclusivists share with their pro-Eastern, syncretistic antagonists the same simplifying tendency to make of "Christian influence" and of "Hindu influence" one of these false alternatives on which the world lives and which obscures the higher polarity between them. Gandhiji also wrote: "I can say that Jesus occupies in my heart the place of one of the great teachers who have made a considerable influence on my life".[17] This tends to prove that Christ, this unique Pole of the monotheistic hemisphere, has at least helped the architect of independent India to actualize and to bring, for the first time in history, to concrete political life an age-old dimension of Hinduism, this homeland of the highest spiritualities of Asia. No wonder that Gandhiji's concept of non-violence has in its turn profoundly influenced contemporary Christian thinkers[18].

The Carolingian Christian Empire has been shaped according to the *City of God* of Saint Augustine, who brought the biblico-Asian spiritual dialogue to its first climax fifteen centuries ago. In Gandhiji and his abovementioned disciples, this same dialogue shapes the political structure of modern India.

A genuine "dialogical" Encounter reveals increasingly the two spiritual hemispheres as being in reality spiritual dimensions of man as man, whether Eastern or Western, and the tension between *enstasis* and *ekstasis* as a tension between two poles inseparably present in every human being. Reflecting in men a mysterious divine antinomy, these spiritual poles constitute the human person as a full person, i.e. as self-transcending interiority polarised by another interiority. They have to remain always in tension, yet in a non violent, inwardly transforming tension which unifies the

whole person and enables man, brought to real peace with himself, to bring real peace to others. "Non-violence is more than peace", Pandit Nehru once told me, more than absence of war. So is biblical Love.

East and West should meet like two spiritual persons. Persons are not "problems" to be solved, but inexhaustible "mysteries" to be explored. The point is not to come to a final agreement, the point is to understand the other as other, more and more, which is love. East and West are like two persons who, having lived long together like strangers, begin to discover that they love each other[19]. The dialogue will never end. Lovers are never tired to meet, to listen and to talk.

Notes

[1] *Encounter at Ascona, Spiritual Disciplines,* Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, London, Routledge, 1960, p. XXI.

[2] Instead of including in this list Confucianism in general, we should rather speak of Neo-Confucianism. The classical Confucianism is indeed based on ultimately ethical rather than metaphysical categories and on a theistic and quasi-personal concept of the "Will of Heaven". Confucius, the Socrates of the East, is an exception to the rule prevailing in spiritual Asia as defined in this essay.

[3] At least as much as the more apparent archetypes "genius" and "hero" of each continent or country.

[4] An interesting study could be made of the possible inner relation between political non-alignment and another eminently Indian summit of spirituality : *advaita* or "non-duality" of he Divine in itself, says *advaita*, man can neither affirm nor deny anything ; therefore, the unqualifiable divine Oneness can only be realized by refusing to opt for any of the complementary aspects of any pair of opposites, including - ultimately - good and evil.

[5] The *Tercer Abecedario* of the Franciscan Ossuna, whose influence was decisive for St. Theresa's of Avila first mystical

experience, is a method of recollection through pure interiorization.

[6] This is the formula by which the fourth Oecumenical Council, held at Chalcedon in 451, distinguishes the two mutually irreductible natures of Christ (the human and the divine) in view to stress their supernatural inner unity (in Christ as Indivisible Person). The recently rediscovered impact of this formula on the faculty to "think in tension" which has stamped Western thought, including modern scientific thought, has been analysed by Denys de Rougement in the brilliant chapter : *from Nicea to the Atomic Age*, of his *Aventure occidentale de l'homme* (Paris, Albin Michel 1957). See also my *Encounter of Religions* (Desclee New York 1960) p. 75–79 (on "antinomic knowledge").

[7] This "metaphysical" or "traditionalist" school seems to know only of a universality conceived in analogy to the reversible world of space and things, and of a basically "extensive" infinity (infinite = unconditioned, unlimited, unqualified) ; it passes in silence over the infinity of "comprehension" abiding in the intrinsic *quality of values* (infinite=perfect, supremely qualified, unique) ; there, universality is conceived in analogy to the irreversible world of time and persons.

[8] Francis Mahieu and Bede Griffiths, the founders of the sannyasi-monastery of Kurishumala (Kerala), among many others.

[9] A similar contrast distinguishes Christian charity from Buddhist *maitri* or "universal benevolence"; as the respective subjects of evanescent elements, the "love"–relation must itself be non-subsistent and evanescent, whereas charity is an ultimately real relation between ultimately real persons.

[10] On the antinomy according to which "spiritual beings can only commune" by that which is "most personal, most incommunicable", and on the fact that the absolute Person" is the pole, not the antipode, of the (human) person", see H. de Lubac's Catholicisme (Cerf, Paris), pp. 301 and 287.

[11] Quoted by Dr. Radhakrishnan in *East and West in Religion*, London, 4th edition 1958, p. 32.

[12] Quoted by A. K. Brohi, High Commissioner of Pakistan, in his *Address* delivered on January 1st, 1961, at the opening of the Ramakrishna Cultural and Educational Exhibition at Coimbatore.

[13] Cf. This surprisingly "biblical" exclamation of Tukaram, a pure Hindu : "Cursed by that knowledge which makes me coincide with Thee, I love to have precepts from Thee and prohibitions." (Quoted by J. Correia–Afonso in The Soul of Modern India, Bombay 1960 p. 7G).

[14] Quoted by S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit. p. 140.

[15] Discovery of India.

[16] For instance by the syncretist philosopher of Religion Friedrich Heiler, quoted by Otto Wolff : *Indiens Beitrag zum neuen Menschenbild*, Rowohlt, Hamburg 1957, p. 68.

[17] Quoted by N. B. Sen. *Wit and Wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi*. New Delhi, 1960 p. 52. Spiritual influences always imply a free response to values. Some sociologists miss the point by treating them in analogy to the instinctive growth of habits, to the impact of climate or to "contagion".

[18] F. i. Pie Regamey O.P. : Non-Violence et Conscience chretienne, Cerf, Paris 1958.

[19] As Gaston Fessard explains in a penetrating work on Hegel, Marx and Christian spirituality, all human relations—individual, social and political—are shaped by the "dialectics of Man and Woman" (analyzed by Marx himself) as much and in a deeper way as by the hegelian "dialectics of Master and Slave". See De l'Actualite historique (Desclee de Brouwer, 1960) vol. I, p. 163 ff.

The Author

Jacques-Albert Cuttat, Ph.D., was born in 1909 and is a Swiss diplomat educated at the Universities of Paris and Berne. He was Secretary at the Swiss Delegation at the League of Nations and later Minister to Ecuador and Columbia, and now to India. For over thirty years, he has devoted himself to the study of Oriental spirituality in its relationship with Christian revelation. His first published works were concerned with Hinduism, Buddhism and Islamic mysticism. During the past ten years, he has taught comparative religion and philosophy at the Universidad de los Andes (Bogota), the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Sorbonne), Columbia University (New York), and has given several series of lectures in Germany and Switzerland. His recent investigations and publications deal mainly with the East and West, in so far as they represent, on the one hand, the "two religious hemispheres of mankind," and on the other, two "inner dimensions of man," the harmonious synthesis of which, in the author's view, constitutes the *person* in the fullest sense of the term.

Among Dr. Cuttat's best-known works are *Paracelse*, *La priere du coeur* (Editions Orthodoxes, Paris 1953; written under the Pseudonym H. de B.), and The Encounter of Religions (Desclee, New York 1960) He has also published important studies on Plotinus, Schopenhaer, and Rene Guenon.